

# The Real New Zealand Street Dance Scene: Beyond Polyswagg and The Royal Family

## Introduction

Kia ora! This document serves as a comprehensive guide to the vibrant and intricate world of New Zealand (Aotearoa) street dance. While Parris Goebel, The Royal Family, and Polyswagg have achieved immense global recognition, it is crucial to clarify their classification within the broader street dance culture. This study aims to provide a detailed overview of the authentic New Zealand street dance scene, highlighting its foundational styles, pioneers, leaders, outstanding dancers, crews, organisations, and major events, all rooted in improvisation, organic community development, and battle culture.

## Polyswagg: Classification within Street Dance Culture

It is important to clarify the classification of Polyswagg within the broader street dance culture. Polyswagg is widely categorised within the dance community as a choreographic style, rather than a foundational freestyle street dance. This distinction is crucial for understanding the authentic New Zealand street dance scene, which is rooted in improvisation, organic community development, and battle culture.

Foundational freestyle street dance styles share core principles such as organic emergence from specific communities (not typically studios), emphasis on improvisation and self-expression, a deep connection to musicality and groove, and development within communal settings like battles and cyphers. Polyswagg, conversely, is largely defined by the artistic vision and choreographic prowess of Parris Goebel, predominantly showcased through meticulously planned and highly synchronised group performances by her crews (The Royal Family, ReQuest Dance

Crew, Sorority). Its focus on pre-planned routines stands in contrast to the spontaneity central to freestyle street dance.

The community's discourse highlights that Polyswagg often involves "reusing choreo" and lacks active participation or development within freestyle cyphers or battle culture, which are crucial proving grounds for street dance foundations. While Polyswagg draws inspiration from styles like Dancehall, it does not typically practice their foundational elements in a freestyle context. Therefore, while a "choreographic masterpiece" with global impact, Polyswagg does not fit the established criteria for a foundational freestyle street dance style.

Below is a comprehensive overview of the authentic New Zealand Street Dance scene, highlighting its pioneers, leaders, outstanding dancers, crews, and organisations across various foundational styles.

## 1. Breaking (B-boying/B-girling)

Breaking, originally termed "b-boying," emerged from the Bronx, New York, in the early 1970s and is a cornerstone of hip-hop culture. It arrived in New Zealand in the early 1980s, influenced by American media (films like *The Warriors*, *Flashdance*, *Beat Street*) and direct kinship connections from American Samoa via Western Samoa. Māori and Pacific Islander youth strongly identified with breaking, finding it a powerful avenue for self-expression and recognition.

### Pioneers and Leaders:

- **K.O.S.-163 (Kosmo Faalogo):** Instrumental in introducing "popping" (and implicitly breaking as part of the "bop" era) to Wellington after visiting Los Angeles in the 1980s, forming early crews like Chain Reaction and Twilite Thrillz.
- **Mr. Zee (Zed Nufable):** Though specialising in multiple styles, his journey began in the Philippines in the 1980s, influencing NZ street dance.
- **Taupuhi Toki (Bboy Papa Smurf):** A 20+ year veteran, co-founded Instance Movement (ISM) breaking crew in 1999, which won the first Raw Stylez national event. He also co-founded Street Talk.

- **David McCavitt (Grub-D):** A cornerstone of NZ Breaking from Christchurch, began in the 1990s and achieved global representation. He was Asia-Pacific representative in Red Bull BC One's top 16 in 2011.
- **Aron Mahuika (B-boy Akorn):** Started breaking around 2001, largely self-taught, and later became a key member of Common Ground Crew, representing NZ internationally.
- **Justin Haiu:** His dance journey was rooted in Kapa Haka and he was inspired by Michael Jackson before gravitating towards breaking, joining early crews like Triple C squad. He fuses external cultural forms into a unique "Aotearoa style".
- **Dujon Cullingford:** A youth and community development expert involved in Aotearoa New Zealand Olympic Breakdance development, clarifying the skill-based qualification process and highlighting funding needs.
- **Bboy Ducky:** A Korean B-boy pioneer and legend who has judged events in NZ.
- **Daniel Jang (Simba):** A key figure in NZ breaking.

## Outstanding Dancers/Competition Winners:

- **Common Ground Crew (Leerok, Grub-D, Bebo):** Won the Hip Hop International Dance Championships 3v3 b-boy showcase in Las Vegas in 2010.
- **Leerok:** Won the New Zealand Battle Of The Year in 2004.
- **Instance Movement (ISM):** Won the inaugural Raw Stylez national event in 1999.
- **Akorn:** Made it to the top 8 at the Oceania Olympic Qualifier in Sydney.
- **Shorty Force:** A Korean breakdancing champion who took top honours at the Red Bull BC One Asia Pacific Qualifier in Auckland.
- **Jamie Park (YT):** Teaches Break Dance and has won the "603 Session Battle".

## Crews and Organisations:

- **Common Ground Crew:** Formed in Christchurch in 2000, known for producing top-quality breakers and having a strong-willed culture across hip-hop elements.
- **Instance Movement (ISM):** Co-founded by Taupuhi Toki in 1999, it signalled a "second wave" of breaking resurgence and focuses on community building.
- **The Projekt Team:** Founded by Josh Mitikulena in 2014, creates accessible spaces for street dancers, fosters community, and leads freestyle and battle dance communities.

- **Auckland Breaking Community:** Offers free classes/jams, taught by Andy Choi and members.
- **En Beat Dance Academy:** Co-founded by Rina Chae and Mr. Zee, offers foundational training in Breaking.
- **Street Talk:** An organisation that hosts workshops, events, and community initiatives, often with a Christian hip-hop focus, including Breaking battles.
- **Boogiehood Connection:** An NZ Funkstyles crew with a long history, featuring OGs like Locking Lizah, Cool Vee, and Dianamite.
- **KPA Battle Squad:** Trains young street dancers in various styles, including Breaking, mentored by John Bernardo.

## Events and Competitions:

- **Bop Olympics (1984):** Held at Mt Smart Stadium, one of the first significant national street dance competitions.
- **Shazam Bop Competition (1985):** Televised national event, increasing mainstream visibility.
- **Battle of the Year (BOTY):** World's biggest breakdance tournament, with Pacific qualifiers held in Auckland in 2016. Black Attack traveled to BOTY in Germany in 2001.
- **Red Bull BC One Auckland Cypher (2013):** Featured top breakers like Roxrite.
- **Parley (2022):** A gathering for crews from across New Zealand, featuring city-versus-city battles.
- **Pop, Lock & Break it (2022, 2024):** A 3v3 street dance battle event including Breaking.
- **Ladies of Hip Hop NZ (2025):** Includes break dance battles and workshops.
- **Olympic Breaking Qualifiers:** NZ participates in Oceanic Olympic qualifiers, highlighting challenges like lack of funding and infrastructure.

## 2. Popping

Popping is a dynamic street dance style born in Fresno, California, where dancers quickly tense and release muscles, creating a "hitting" effect. It arrived in NZ in the early 1980s as part of the "bop" era, with "bopping" becoming a local term for the style due to Samoan pronunciation.

## Pioneers and Leaders:

- **Ross Smith (Future / Ra Smith):** An Original Generation (OG) NZ popper based in Wellington, instrumental in teaching the philosophy, roots, and context of popping to the 2000s generation.
- **River Vili (Mase Boog):** Revered as a true OG of the NZ popping scene with over 29 years of experience, known for his fluid style and mentorship from Suga Pop of the Electric Boogaloos.
- **Diana Hu (Dianamite):** A versatile force in the scene, excelling in Popping, Boogaloo, and Breaking. She is the backbone behind the Auckland Popping Community (APC) and a tireless organiser, hosting jams and workshops with international legends.
- **Mr. Zee (Zed Nufable):** Highly respected figure specialising in Hip Hop Freestyle, House, and Popping, with international experience.
- **Lawrence Liew:** A passionate dancer with expertise in House and Popping, actively builds the Auckland popping scene, teaches beginners, and sponsors Neverland Studios.
- **Josh Rumbold (JR):** A popping specialist and photographer, involved in organising dance gatherings like "Unleash The Funk".
- **Sejoo Han:** A popping specialist from Projekt Team, teaching at Auckland Popping Club and En Beat Dance Academy.
- **Natasha Katavich:** A notable member of Candee Collective who specialises in popping.

## Outstanding Dancers/Competition Winners:

- **John Vaifale (Happyfeet):** Versatile Hip Hop Freestyler, crowned Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ National Champion in 2023, representing NZ at the World Finals in Germany.
- **Lawrence Liew:** Reached top 8 at Destructive Steps 5 in Sydney in 2013.
- **Fan Wang:** Won a semi-final tiebreak at Waack It Out 2013.
- **Mang Yu:** Victorious in compelling popping battles at the Creative Collision Projects dance summit in June 2019.

## Crews and Organisations:

- **Auckland Popping Community (APC) / Auckland Popping Club (APC):** A vital public Facebook group serving as a central nexus for dancers, hosting free popping jam sessions and fostering intergenerational connections. Rebranded in 2023.
- **603 Boogie Squad:** An active dance group focusing on Popping and Locking, coached by Mr. Zee.
- **The Projekt Team:** Hosts Britomart Backyard Dance Battles and Projekt Feel Good, engaging with various street styles including Popping.
- **Hopskotch Dance Crew / Hopskotch Dance TV:** Operates a YouTube channel documenting the NZ street dance scene, including popping events.
- **En Beat Dance Academy:** Offers foundational training in Popping.
- **Street Talk NZ:** Consistently hosts workshops, events, and community initiatives.
- **FL09 (Flow 09):** A new generation popping team in NZ.
- **Mighty Zong Kitchen:** A successful team that won a competition, featuring Sejoo Han and Tanky Zong.

## Events and Competitions:

- **Easy Street Volume 2:** "Aotearoa Funkstyles Event of the Year," featuring a "Ultimate 1-on-1 Popping Battle" with international guest judges Mr. Wiggles and Hozin.
- **Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ Final (2023):** Included Popping among the styles.
- **Pop, Lock & Break it (various dates):** A 3v3 street dance battle event including Popping.
- **Pop What You Got Vol. 2 (Oct 2024):** Held at Takutai Square, Britomart, involving collaboration with Projekt Team, with Diana Hu and Taupuhi Toki as judges.
- **Chinese Night Performance (2015):** Instance Movement collaborated with APC, demonstrating inter-style cooperation.

## 3. Locking

Locking, a dynamic and expressive street dance style, was created by Don "Campbellock" Campbell in Los Angeles in the late 1960s. It reached New Zealand in the

early 1980s, referred to collectively as "bop". It deeply resonated with Māori, Samoan, and Polynesian youth, offering an avenue for identity and belonging.

## Pioneers and Leaders:

- **Locking Lizah:** An OG street dancer in New Zealand and a member of Boogie Hood Connection (BHC), featured in videos demonstrating locking skills.
- **Vaugh Aiono (Cool Vee):** Another OG street dancer in New Zealand and a member of Boogie Hood Connection (BHC).
- **Kat Walker (Katto Lock):** An exceptionally active and "legendary" figure in the NZ street dance landscape, associated with Street Talk NZ and Projekt Team. She judges Locking competitions and nurtures new dancers.
- **Mele "Marshmele" Taeiloa:** A preeminent figure in NZ's locking community, Head of Learning Area for Dance at Manurewa High School, performs and competes internationally, and judges Locking battles.
- **John Bernardo (JB, Prevail):** A leader of NZ Campbelllocking and House dancer, previously taught at TST Studios NZ, and mentors KPA Battle Squad. He emphasizes cultural acknowledgment and learning foundations.
- **Mr. Zee (Zed Nufable):** Co-owner/director of Enbeat Dance Academy, which offers foundational locking classes.

## Outstanding Dancers/Competition Winners:

- **Mele Taeiloa:** Performed and competed internationally at events like the World Hip Hop Championships and "Lock Is Not a Joke" (France).
- **Kat Walker:** Reigning two-time champion of the 'Long Live the Queen' all-style battles (2018–2019).

## Crews and Organisations:

- **NZ Lockers:** An active Facebook group and crucial community hub for Locking in New Zealand.
- **Boogie Hood Connection (BHC):** An early dance group featuring OG dancers Locking Lizah, Cool Vee, Taupuhi Toki, and Dianamite.
- **Projekt Team:** Actively presents and sponsors community events like "Projekt Feel Good" and is associated with "Lockers New Zealand".



- **Kinetic Studio:** Offers Locking classes in Auckland CBD.
- **Enbeat Dance Academy:** Offers foundational Locking classes.
- **LH Combine:** Instrumental in organizing "Lock It In" Locking Events and Competitions in NZ.
- **KPA Battle Squad:** Trains young street dancers in Locking, mentored by John Bernardo.
- **603 Boogie Squad:** Active in Popping and Locking, coached by Mr. Zee.

## Events and Competitions:

- **Bop Olympics (1984):** Included Locking as part of "bop".
- **Pop, Lock & Break it (various dates):** A 3v3 street dance battle event featuring Locking.
- **Lock It In Locking Event (2023):** Meticulously organised by LH Combine, featuring dedicated locking battles and showcases.
- **Battlegrounds NZ (May 2016):** Included dedicated 1v1 and 2v2 Locking categories.

## 4. Krump

Krump, an intensely expressive and energetic street dance, originated in South Central Los Angeles in the early 2000s as a positive outlet for emotions, offering an alternative to gang life. Its global dissemination, and pivotal introduction to NZ, was largely due to the 2005 documentary *Rize*. Krump resonated deeply with Māori and Pasifika youth in NZ, finding fertile ground for its high-energy movements and aligning with existing cultural expressions like Haka.

## Pioneers and Leaders:

- **Ken Vaega (Lightsaber / Jr Street Beast / formerly Jr Example):** A pivotal figure, he became the first New Zealander to win the Krump World Championships in 2018. He is the founder of the Lighthouse fam and co-founded the LH Combine collective. He runs the Krump Club of Ōtara, teaching children Krump and instilling positive values.



- **Joash Fahitua:** Played a critical role in formalising the competitive aspect of Krump by hosting the first-ever Krump competition in New Zealand and achieving numerous victories with his crew.
- **Israel Adesanya (Black Majik / Big Llow / Big Willow):** Prominent early Krump dancer affiliated with Broken Naes crew before becoming a renowned MMA fighter. He contributed to the Rotorua scene and co-founded the Bully Nerdz crew.
- **Chris Teava (EXCBS / Boy Ruin):** Founder of the EXCBS Krump fam and Krump Aotearoa, a significant competitor and organiser of major Krump events.
- **Byrin Mita (XIII / former Jr Mutiny / Kidd Konkrete):** Founder of the XIII WRLD collective and XIII Fam, nurturing young talent in various street dance styles including Krump. He notes similarities between Krump and Haka.
- **John Vaifale (Happy Feet):** One of NZ's leading freestyle hip-hop dancers, holding various titles, including a Krump Dance Championship at Australia's World Supremacy Battlegrounds.
- **Lance Ureta (Blvd):** A leader and Krump dancer in Waikato, known for using Krump as a release and expression.
- **Big Yak:** Pioneer of the Christchurch Krump movement, known for original style and bravado, active for 14 years.
- **Ennoalla Paea-Vaega (formerly Ennoalla Paea):** Ken Vaega's wife and co-founder of the LH Combine collective, director of Lighthouse Famz, focusing on Krump and community development. She also directed the all-wāhine (female) Krump theatre show "World of Watch:MIN".
- **Trenton Omeri (12AF / Badass Street Beast):** An expressive street artist, educator, and advocate, consistently featured in battles and discussions across different eras, known for high-level competing.
- **Sheldon Rua:** Founder of FALHEDDZ, a prominent House Dance and Culture movement in the South Pacific, but also a Krump dancer.

## Outstanding Dancers/Competition Winners:

- **Ken Vaega:** Won the Krump World Championships in Dusseldorf, Germany (2018). He also won King of Buck 3v3 in 2023 and European Buck Session in 2018.
- **Stacy Meng (Baby XIII):** Won Youth Division - All Styles at Step Ya Game Up 2023 in New York City.

- **Rian Gounder (Prince Lightsaber):** Gold Medal, Youth Battle World Championship (Global), and Silver Medal, U15 category at K.O.B. dance competition in Japan (first NZ competitor to place in this prestigious youth category).
- **John Vaifale (Happy Feet):** Krump Dance Championship title at Australia's World Supremacy Battlegrounds.

## Crews and Organisations:

- **EXCBS Krump Fam:** Founded by Chris Teava, a foundational pillar in the competitive scene.
- **Lighthouse Fam (later LH Combine):** Established by Ken Vaega, merged with Watchmin World. Responsible for the Krump Club of Ōtara, supporting youth development and connecting NZ dancers globally. Hosts "Beatdown" events.
- **Krump Aotearoa:** Central support network for the New Zealand Krump community, organizing significant events.
- **Hyperush Empire:** A prominent Krump fam led by Alexander "Aktive" Teratuia.
- **Underground Kings:** Significant early force, winning the first national Krump competition in 2007.
- **XIII WRDL collective / XIII Fam:** Founded by Byrin Mita, nurtures young talent in various street dance styles, including Krump.
- **Watchmin World (Watchmin Fam):** Founded by Ennoalla Paea-Vaega, specifically focuses on empowering women in Krump.
- **Krump Club of Ōtara:** Community safe space, part of Lighthouse fam, providing training for kids.

## Events and Competitions:

- **NZ Krump Nationals:** Major annual events that became foundational pillars of the scene.
- **Beatdown Events:** Hosted by Lighthouse Famz, play a crucial role in developing the Auckland Dance Battle community.
- **Heart of Krump NZ (2008):** Featured numerous battles, including NZ VS AUS rounds, demonstrating early international competitive exposure.
- **K.O.B. (King of Buck) NZ Qualifier:** Showcases Mens, Kids, Womens, and Teams finals.

- **Projekt Feel Good:** An annual Hip Hop and Street Dance Experience held in South Auckland, fostering positive and safe spaces.
- **World of Watch:MIN (2024):** A theatre show featuring an all-wāhine (female) cast telling authentic stories through Krump, emphasising mana wahine.

## 5. Waacking

Waacking, a dynamic and expressive street dance, emerged from the vibrant LGBTQIA+ club scene of 1970s Los Angeles during the disco era. It is characterised by fluid, rotational arm movements, striking poses, and an emphasis on individual expressiveness. It serves as a crucial space for cultural expression and affirmation for LGBTQIA+ and People of Color (POC) communities.

### Pioneers and Leaders:

- **Jaydess Nand:** A pivotal figure in establishing and leading the Waacking community in New Zealand. She trained with legendary mentors including OG and Waacking Father Tyrone 'The Bone' Proctor. She is widely credited with actively managing and nurturing the NZ Waacking community and co-leads The Jaackers. She founded 'Waack It Out' and 'Whats Yo Style', the first street dance battle competitions in NZ to feature a formalized Waacking competition. She also innovated "Desi Waack," fusing her Indian heritage with Bollywood music.
- **Rina Chae:** Assumed a significant leadership role as the Mother of Imperial House of Waacking (New Zealand chapter) and co-directs En Beat Dance Academy. She returned from Los Angeles (having danced with Beyoncé) to elevate the NZ dance scene.
- **Hayley Walters-Tekahika:** Founder of Prowl Productions, a Waacking specialist and creative director, co-directed "CLUB WAACK," paying homage to waacking through a queer Aotearoa lens.
- **Angelika Zueva:** An original member of Street Candee, with a strong background in commercial dance and K-Pop, contributing to the versatility of the scene.
- **Peggy Yao:** A dancer specialising in Vogue Femme, Vogue Old Way, and Waacking, actively contributing to the vibrant battle scene.
- **Earl De Castro:** A notable figure recognised for significant contributions to both Waacking and Voguing, with acclaimed work "Liberate-He" fusing both styles.

- **Lara Chuo (Noir from Avant House of Dawn):** A Waacking practitioner with Prowl Productions, highlighting the connection between Waacking and the ballroom scene in NZ.

## Outstanding Dancers/Competition Winners:

- **Jaydess Nand:** Waacking champion from Unleash The Beast 2015 Australia and semi-finalist (top 4) at Waack Fest LA, USA in 2015.
- **Imperial House of Waacking New Zealand (IHOW NZ):** Secured 1st Place in the Team Division at World of Dance New Zealand in both 2024 and 2025.
- **Eramiha Abrams (Hina Givenchy):** Won the female figure performance category at Ladies of Hip Hop NZ.
- **Heidi Chen, Peggy Yao, and Earl De Castro:** Competed in Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ in May 2023.

## Crews and Organisations:

- **The Jaackers NZ:** New Zealand's first dedicated Waacking company, established in 2015 by Jaydess Nand, with a presence in both NZ and Australia. They offer free workshops.
- **Imperial House of Waacking New Zealand (IHOW\_NZ):** Local chapter of a global collective, led by Mother Rina Chae, with significant competitive success.
- **Prowl Productions:** An entertainment company specialising in street dance theatre, known for shows like 'PROWL' and offering free workshops in Waacking, Vogue, and Open Choreography, focusing on queer people of colour.
- **Street Candee / Candee Collective:** Founded by Rina Chae, a prominent commercial/hip-hop studio, deeply involved in the broader street dance community and offering Waacking.
- **En Beat Dance Academy:** Co-founded by Rina Chae and Mr. Zee, offers structured training in various street styles, including Waacking.
- **Waackalicious:** A dance crew specializing in Waacking, associated with Auckland Pride's Waack Attack.

## Events and Competitions:

- **Waack It Out:** Key battle event series, founded by Jaydess Nand, the first street dance battle competition in NZ to formally feature Waacking.
- **Ladies of Hip Hop New Zealand (LOHH NZ):** A significant annual festival celebrating and uplifting women and girls in Hip Hop and street dance culture, with explicit inclusion of Waacking battles and workshops.
- **Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ Final (2023):** Featured Waacking among the styles.
- **World of Waacking Battles: Express Your Culture (June 2025):** Encourages dancers to represent their ethnic culture, fostering accessibility and inclusivity.
- **"Club Waack" (2023):** A theatrical production by Prowl Productions, telling a local story of queer people building community through dance.
- **Battlezone:** Imperial House of Waacking NZ featured in Battlezone in 2024.
- **Auckland Pride's Waack Attack:** Explicitly links Waacking to the LGBTQIA+ community.

## 6. House Dance

House Dance originated in the underground club scenes of Chicago and New York during the late 1970s and early 1980s. It is characterized by freedom of expression, spontaneous improvisation, a profound connection to the music, intricate footwork, and distinct body isolations. It fostered an inclusive environment with an ethos of "check your ego at the door".

### Pioneers and Leaders:

- **Mr. Zee (Zed Nufable):** Highly respected figure specialising in Hip Hop Freestyle, House, and Popping, with international experience.
- **Lawrence Liew:** Created the "Auckland House dance Community (AHC)" Facebook group in 2014, serving as a hub for dancers to connect and share information.
- **John Bernardo (JB, Prevail):** A leader of NZ Campbellocking and House dancer, previously taught at TST Studios NZ. Mentions doing House jams.
- **Jazmine Cox:** Launched DreamCatchers WorldWide Ltd. and was instrumental in renaming AHC to "HOUSE DANCE NZ - (HDNZ)," aiming to push the movement and provide a consistent training platform.

- **John Vaifale (Happyfeet):** Versatile freestyler and prominent DJ, crowned 2023 Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ National Champion and Faleheddz Vol. 1 Champion. He is a go-to DJ for battles and jams.
- **Sheldon Rua:** Founded FALEHEDDZ, a prominent House Dance and Culture movement in the South Pacific, hosting free weekly community House Jams. He also teaches house dance at En Beat Dance Academy.
- **Ken Vaega (Lightsaber, Jr Street Beast):** An influential MC who hosts backyard battles and regular LH Combine Monday House jams within the HipHop Househeads Aotearoa community.
- **Manobhi Sys:** Subbed as a House teacher for Lawrence in March 2014 and covered studio hire to make jams free.
- **Gabriel Nito:** A member of Flowmotion dance crew and 603 Boogie Squad, teaches "Beginner House" at HIT Dance Studio and is a constant presence at jams.

## Outstanding Dancers/Competition Winners:

- **John Vaifale "Happyfeet":** Achieved significant recognition, crowned the Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ National Champion in 2023.

## Crews and Organisations:

- **Auckland House dance Community (AHC) / HOUSE DANCE NZ - (HDNZ):** Facebook group created by Lawrence Liew in 2014, renamed in November 2014, serving as a hub for House dance in NZ.
- **DreamCatchers WorldWide Ltd.:** Jazmine Cox's dance company aimed to train dancers in various Hip Hop and Street Dance forms.
- **FALEHEDDZ:** Founded by Sheldon Rua, a prominent House Dance and Culture movement in the South Pacific, hosting free, weekly community House Jams and competitive events.
- **HipHop & House Dance Headz / HipHop Househeads Aotearoa:** Community in Tāmaki Makaurau (Auckland) promoting Hip Hop and House Dance culture, led by Mr. Zee.
- **Projekt Team:** Maintains a YouTube channel featuring Faleheddz battles and showcases, and organises dance events.

- **Kinetic Dance Studio NZ:** Established in Auckland CBD in 2021, hosts diverse curriculum and community events like Faleheddz House Jams.
- **En Beat Dance Academy:** Offers foundational classes including House.

## Events and Competitions:

- **"Ladies of Hip Hop":** Free House Dance Workshops offered by Candee Collective.
- **LH Combine Monday House jams:** Regular jams hosted by Ken Vaega within the HipHop Househeads Aotearoa community.
- **Britomart Backyard Battles:** Organised by Faleheddz and Projekt Team.
- **"Funk in da House" (March 2024):** Energetic House battle.
- **Ladies Of Hip Hop Aotearoa 2025 festival:** Will feature exhibition battles in multiple styles, including House, and bring international House icon Toyin Sogunro.
- **Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ Final:** Includes House as one of the featured styles.

## 7. Vogue

Vogue, a highly stylized, modern house dance, originated in the late 1980s from the Harlem ballroom scene of the 1960s, drawing inspiration from fashion magazines. It gained mainstream exposure through Madonna's 1990 song "Vogue" and the 1990 documentary *Paris Is Burning*, inspiring future NZ practitioners like Roy Aati. The Aotearoa New Zealand Vogue Ballroom scene is a relatively young but rapidly flourishing subculture, primarily driven by and serving LGBTQI+ Pacific Islander communities. It celebrates "Queer Brown bodies, contemporary Pacific arts, and cultural restoration".

## Pioneers and Leaders:

- **Jaycee Tanuvasa:** A creative artist, choreographer, and one of the pioneers of Aotearoa's ballroom vogue scene. She is the founding Mother to the international House of Iman, creating events and workshops specifically for "queer brown people".



- **Pati Solomona Tyrell and Tanu Gago:** Credited with initiating the organised ballroom scene in NZ, founding FAFSWAG Arts Collective in 2013.
- **Mother Mistress Coven-Carangi:** Facilitated FAFSWAG's first vogue balls in 2013.
- **Romé 007 and Karamera 007:** Founders of Wellington Ballroom, who initiated free fortnightly community workshops that rapidly grew in attendance.
- **Peggy Yao:** A dancer specializing in Vogue Femme, Vogue Old Way, and Waacking, actively contributing to the vibrant battle scene.
- **Earl De Castro:** Notable figure recognised for significant contributions to both Waacking and Voguing, with acclaimed work "Liberate-He" fusing both styles.
- **Brady Peeti:** A proud transgender Wāhine Māori performer featured in Vogue events.

## Crews and Organisations:

- **FAFSWAG Arts Collective:** Founded in Auckland in 2013, widely credited with initiating the organised ballroom scene, challenging lack of Indigenous LGBTQI+ representation.
- **House of Coven (originally Kiki House of Coven):** Established in 2015 as the first official house in the Aotearoa ballroom scene.
- **House of Iman:** Jaycee Tanuvasa's vogue house, creating events and workshops for "queer brown people".
- **Prowl Productions:** Offers free workshops in Waacking, Vogue, and Open Choreography, highlighting queer people of color.
- **Wellington Ballroom:** A collective that initiated workshops to teach the history and fundamentals of voguing and runway, significantly growing the community in Wellington.
- **Kiki House of Marama:** Active in Wellington.

## Events and Competitions:

- **FAFSWAG balls:** Began in 2013 at Te Puke ō Tara Community Centre in Ōtara, South Auckland.
- **AITU Ball (2020):** Hosted by House of Aitu in Wellington, igniting the local scene.

- **Pride Wairau Vogue Leather and Lace Ball (June 2025):** Held in Blenheim, indicating further regional spread.
- **Te Papa events:** Such as "Celebrating Pride: Strike a Pose and Learn to Vogue," signifying institutional recognition.
- **"Club Waack":** Theatrical production featuring Waacking and Vogue, exploring queer struggle and community building.
- **"Projekt Feel Good":** Incorporates "swift vogue movements" and "explosive krumping," fostering positive, safe spaces for expression.
- **Auckland Pride's Waack Attack:** Explicitly links Waacking to the LGBTQIA+ community.

## 8. Hip Hop Freestyle

Hip Hop dance, originating in New York City in the 1970s, is defined by energetic movements like Bounces, Rock, Skate, and Roll, with deep historical and social roots within African American and Latino communities. It evolved into a freestyle form drawing from foundational grooves.

### Pioneers and Leaders:

- **Mr. Zee (Zed Nufable):** Highly respected figure specialising in Hip Hop Freestyle, House, and Popping, with international experience. Co-founder of En Beat Dance Academy.
- **John Vaifale (Happy Feet):** A leading Hip Hop Freestyler, crowned Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ National Champion in 2023, known for blending styles and integrating Polynesian and NZ culture. He founded the "Loose Change" hip-hop freestyle battle event.
- **Ken Vaega:** An influential MC who hosts backyard battles and regular LH Combine Monday House jams within the HipHop Househeads Aotearoa community. He has been an integral part of the Street Dance Community since 2011, leaving his mark on crews such as Eclipse, Common Connection, and Prestige Dance Crew.
- **Rina Chae:** Co-founder of En Beat Dance Academy, bridging NZ with the global dance industry, particularly K-pop, through choreography and K-pop agent roles. She also co-presented 'HERSTORY' – Ladies of Hip Hop Aotearoa.

- **Josh Mitikulena (Kokonut):** Founder of Hopskotch Dance Crew and The Projekt Team, fostering accessible, community-focused environments and creating culturally integrated productions.
- **Kat Walker (Katto Lock):** A prominent figure since 2005, versatile across various styles, including Hip Hop, and a dance educator.
- **Celina Torres:** Involved in hip-hop crews IQ Adults and Stereo Hype, expanding her movement vocabulary to include popping and isolation.
- **Ooshcon:** An experimental Hip Hop movement artist from New Zealand, skilled in various street dance styles, who focuses on self-discovery and mindful movement.

## Outstanding Dancers/Competition Winners:

- **John Vaifale (Happy Feet):** Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ National Champion 2023.
- **Kat Walker:** Reigning two-time champion of the 'Long Live the Queen' all-style battles (2018–2019).
- **Rian Gounder (Prince Lightsaber) & Raul Gounder (Yg Lightsaber):** Awarded 3rd Place in the Junior Duo category at Hip Hop Unite World Championships in Portugal (2024).

## Crews and Organisations:

- **The Projekt Team:** New Zealand's largest All Style Street Dance collective, organising Britomart Backyard Battles, Fusion Concept NZ Qualifier, and Projekt Feel Good.
- **En Beat Dance Academy:** Focuses on foundational street style, commercial forms, and K-pop, offering paid classes in Hip Hop.
- **Identity Dance Company (IDCO):** A pillar of Aotearoa's street dance scene, known for countless national and international titles and skillful performances, competing in choreography competitions like HHI and World of Dance, but also excelling in freestyle and battle events.
- **Hopskotch Dance Crew:** Founded and choreographed by Josh Mitikulena in 2008, made significant artistic contributions through innovative Hip Hop dance, with signature production "Kiwiana".

- **Saints Dance Crew/Saints Up Performing Arts:** Started 2006, world champions 2015.
- **Street Candee / Candee Collective:** Rina Chae's multidisciplinary crew, excelling in choreography, commercial dance, and street dance battles, including Hip Hop.
- **XIII WRLD Collective:** High-performance street dance team and developmental program, fostering young talent in Hip Hop.
- **Yung ID:** IDCO's junior team, 2025 World Dance Crew Championship winners.
- **Street Talk:** Hosts various street dance events, including workshops and battles, promoting hip hop culture and community.
- **House of Bounce:** Offers Hip Hop classes, with Happy Feet teaching there.

## Events and Competitions:

- **Red Bull Dance Your Style NZ Final (2023):** All-styles street dance competition featuring Hip Hop.
- **World Hip Hop Dance Championships (HHI):** NZ crews consistently achieve top placements. IDCO currently holds National Champion titles in various divisions, qualifying them for the World HHI.
- **Ladies of Hip Hop New Zealand (LOHH NZ):** Festival celebrating and uplifting women and girls in Hip Hop and street dance culture.
- **Projekt Feel Good:** Annual Hip Hop and Street Dance Experience, fostering positive and safe spaces.
- **Britomart Backyard Battles:** A summer dance battle series by Projekt Team, highlighting different street dance communities.
- **World Dance Crew Championship (WDCC) 2025:** New prestigious biennial international dance competition set to take place in Auckland, featuring hip hop, club, and street dance across five divisions.

## Cultural Integration and "Aotearoa Flavour"

New Zealand's street dance scene demonstrates a remarkable capacity to absorb overseas influences and imbue them with rich local meanings, creating a distinct "Aotearoa flavour". This is particularly evident in the integration of Māori and Pacific Island cultural elements.

- **"Bopping":** The term itself is a local adaptation, stemming from a Samoan pronunciation of "popping," highlighting the profound influence of Samoan culture on early street dance in NZ.
- **Joe Moana's "Poi E" cameo:** His dance segments in the Pātea Māori Club's 1984 hit 'Poi E' uniquely blended Māori cultural practices with hip hop elements, setting a groundbreaking precedent for cultural integration.
- **Krump and Haka parallels:** Big Mijo observed that New Zealanders possess the Haka to draw from, suggesting an early recognition of cultural parallels between Krump's raw power and the spiritual expression of Haka. Byrin Mita explicitly draws connections between Krump and Haka.
- **"Popping Puletasi":** Seidah Tuaoi's groundbreaking initiative fuses Samoan traditional dance and attire (siva Samoa and puletasi) with popping, gaining global recognition.
- **Vogue and Queer Indigenous Identity:** The Aotearoa/Oceanic Ballroom vogue scene explicitly incorporates "Rainbow Pacific Pride" and centers on "Māori and Pacific LGBTQI+ artists," providing crucial spaces for "queer brown people" to thrive.
- **Cultural Ownership:** The scene emphasises learning from "OGs" and authentic sources to combat cultural appropriation, especially given the roots of many styles in Black and/or LGBTQ+ communities. Debates around "biting" (copying unique moves without credit) reinforce the value of originality and respect for creators.

## Challenges and Community Ethos

The New Zealand street dance community, despite its vibrancy, faces several challenges:

- **Funding and Resources:** There is a critical lack of dedicated funding and infrastructure for street dance, with many dancers self-funding international trips. Reliance on volunteering is unsustainable for fostering elite talent.
- **Public Misconceptions:** Styles like Krump can be perceived as "ugly" or "violent" due to their aggressive appearance, leading to misunderstandings and institutional barriers. Breaking also suffers from an "80s stereotype hangover," where the public still believes it's solely about head spins.

- **Commercialisation vs. Authenticity:** The shift from spontaneous street performances to formal, commercial spaces brings visibility but risks diluting the "free and urban nature" and authenticity of street dance.
- **Divisions within the Community:** Philosophical divides exist between freestyle (improvisation, authenticity) and choreography (pre-planned routines, performance), and distinct stylistic communities sometimes operate in parallel.

Despite these challenges, the community is resilient, fostering a strong ethos of community building, mentorship, and accessibility. Initiatives like Projekt Feel Good and the emphasis on free jams and beginner classes demonstrate a commitment to nurturing new talent and providing safe spaces for expression and identity formation. The "multi-hyphenate" dancer, versatile across styles, also strengthens the ecosystem through cross-pollination of techniques and ideas.

## Conclusion

The New Zealand street dance scene is a dynamic and intricate ecosystem, characterised by both vibrant diversity and underlying tensions. It presents a compelling narrative of cultural adaptation, community resilience, and artistic innovation. From its origins rooted in global hip hop culture, the scene has been profoundly shaped and enriched by Aotearoa's unique spirit and communities, particularly Māori and Pacific Islander youth, who discovered in it a powerful channel for identity, recognition, and even a contemporary form of cultural resistance.

While styles like Polyswagg have achieved immense global commercial success and visibility for New Zealand dance, their classification as choreographic rather than foundational street dance styles is a crucial distinction. This difference stems from their top-down, choreographer-led development, emphasis on set routines, and limited engagement with the improvisational battle and cypher culture that define foundational forms. The ongoing community discourse surrounding authenticity underscores the deep value placed on organic evolution, individual expression, and collective ownership within the foundational street dance community.

Despite facing persistent challenges such as limited funding, societal misconceptions, and internal philosophical divides, the New Zealand street dance scene exhibits remarkable strength. Its deep cultural fusion, robust community-building initiatives,

and the impactful contributions of multi-hyphenate leaders position it for continued innovation. The scene's ability to integrate global influences while exporting its distinctive "Aotearoa flavour" ensures its ongoing relevance and growing international presence. Moving forward, sustained investment in community-led initiatives, comprehensive education on style origins, and continued dialogue between diverse dance practices will be essential for preserving the scene's authentic roots while fostering its continued growth and global impact.